



STATE OF MICHIGAN  
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION  
LANSING


RICK SNYDER  
GOVERNOR

MICHAEL P. FLANAGAN  
SUPERINTENDENT OF  
PUBLIC INSTRUCTION

May 1, 2012

**MEMORANDUM**

TO: State Board of Education

FROM: Michael P. Flanagan, Chairman 

SUBJECT: Presentation on Safe and Supportive Schools

At the State Board of Education's (SBE) request, the Coordinated School Health and Safety Program (CSHSP) will provide a presentation on Safe and Supportive Schools. The SBE has developed many related policies critical to this topic. Policies directly related are found at the following links:

- Policies for Creating Effective Learning Environments 2000  
[www.michigan.gov/documents/bdpolicy001214\\_16470\\_7.pdf](http://www.michigan.gov/documents/bdpolicy001214_16470_7.pdf)
- Coordinated School Health Programs to Support Academic Achievement 2003  
[www.michigan.gov/documents/CSHP\\_Policy\\_77375\\_7.pdf](http://www.michigan.gov/documents/CSHP_Policy_77375_7.pdf)
- Universal Education Vision & Principles 2005  
[www.michigan.gov/documents/UnivEdBrochureFINAL\\_incl\\_152066\\_7\\_Glossary\\_03-02-06a.pdf](http://www.michigan.gov/documents/UnivEdBrochureFINAL_incl_152066_7_Glossary_03-02-06a.pdf)
- Model Anti-Bullying Policy 2010  
[http://www.michigan.gov/documents/mde/Model\\_Anti-Bullying\\_Policy\\_with\\_Revisions\\_338592\\_7.pdf](http://www.michigan.gov/documents/mde/Model_Anti-Bullying_Policy_with_Revisions_338592_7.pdf)

Michigan was one of 11 states to receive a four-year grant to assist persistently low-achieving high schools in improving conditions for learning. Michigan was the only state to include a parent engagement component in its grant application, perhaps leading to the highest grant review score and the largest grant award.

The presentation will underscore lessons learned during the first year of grant funding for participating high schools, specifically policy challenges such as Michigan's zero tolerance policies that create barriers to learning. A report on zero tolerance recommendations (Attachment 1) developed by the SBE intern, Hyun-Seung Kwak, will be highlighted. The national movement to reassess the impact zero tolerance laws and policies have on student dropouts and fostering a "cradle-to-prison" pipeline will be discussed. Finally, the presentation will address the SBE 2006 report on Keeping Kids in School which identifies issues and potential next steps for the SBE and the Department. This report can be found at the following link: [www.michigan.gov/documents/Item\\_Y\\_166218\\_7.pdf](http://www.michigan.gov/documents/Item_Y_166218_7.pdf).

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608 WEST ALLEGAN STREET • P.O. BOX 30008 • LANSING, MICHIGAN 48909  
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Zero Tolerance Recommendations

- a) **Enhance alternative education opportunities for suspended or expelled students:** For suspended or expelled students' alternative learning opportunities are frequently scarce or nonexistent. Location and age/grade level of students often poses additional challenges to finding appropriate educational placements. The quality and culture of available alternative programs also raises challenges for many suspended or expelled students. Alternative education programs need a greater variety of instructional practices, more learning-based approaches to discipline, and expansion into all grade levels. Many states, including Texas and Tennessee, have made efforts to improve the quality of their alternative education system by developing a set of standards and evaluating the effectiveness of their system. To strengthen the quality of education for suspended or expelled students, Michigan needs to examine the effectiveness of current alternative education program opportunities.
- b) **Enhance data collection on suspended or expelled students:** The current school safety data collection systems only include information on expelled students. To improve knowledge of the impact of zero-tolerance policies on students and their families, Michigan should also collect data on student suspensions, including information on the specific reason(s) a student is being suspended or expelled, their gender, and race/ethnicity. Such information would better inform educational policies and practices in schools.
- c) **Enhance classroom management skills:** At the classroom level, teachers need to implement differentiated instructional practices that actively engage all students, including students with special needs, in their learning. To do this, a variety of classroom management strategies might be promoted, (e.g., No Missing Assignment, Eliminating Barriers for Learning, Positive Behavioral Intervention and Support, Response to Intervention, Check-in/check-out, and Restorative Practices). However, the essence of such classroom interventions is for teachers to motivate students and involve students and their parents in their children's learning, not solely to "punish" students. Such enhancements would require pre-service training and professional development on effective classroom management and differentiated instruction in order for teachers to apply appropriate interventions or instructional techniques in their classroom.
- d) **Enhance conditions for learning:** To impact school culture requires an examination of the relationships found within the school setting, including staff relations, staff-student interactions, parent/community involvement, etc. Schools also need a paradigm shift in their approach to student discipline from one of "convict and sentence" to one that repairs harm, builds relationships and personal responsibility, and encourages more effective personal behavior management. Alternative discipline programs need to pursue instruction in social skills, positive reinforcement of appropriate behaviors, and opportunities to learn new behavior skills. To be effectively implemented, such changes would require the active support of school leaders, teachers and staff, students, and parents. Such a shift in disciplinary policies and practices would also require professional development for staff. There are several programs currently being used in Michigan schools, such as Restorative Justice Practices (e.g. circles, transformative conferences), Michigan's Integrated Behavior and Learning Support Initiative (MiBLSi), Why Try, Bully Free Schools, and service learning that have demonstrated an impact on school climate, student engagement, and academic achievement.